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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MOSCOW 000435

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: DFM TITOV: RUSSIA WILL BE RESPONSIBLE ON KOSOVO,  
BOSNIA, POLAND

REF: A. MOSCOW 251  
[1](#)B. MOSCOW 410

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns: Reasons 1.4 (b, d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In a February 14 meeting with the Ambassador, DFM Titov reiterated warnings over the destabilizing consequences of Kosovo's impending UDI, but said Russia would respond "responsibly," including by convoking a UN Security Council special session, and issuing sharp statements of condemnation from the MFA, Kremlin, and parliament; separately, we understand the GOR rebuffed a proposed visit by FM Jeremic on February 20. Quoting Putin, Titov said Russia would not "mirror" the West's recognition of Kosovo with its partners in the frozen conflicts, but over time would advance its interests. (At the same time, DFM Karasin was meeting with Abkhaz "FM" Shamba to discuss post-Kosovo UDI relations.) Titov ruled out a Serb (or Russian) military response, but predicted a new frozen conflict would emerge in Northern Kosovo, with -- depending on Serbia's actions -- the prospect of violence or displacement in the central and southern Serb enclaves. Titov urged open lines of communication on both Kosovo and Bosnia, where the GOR is concerned by recent setbacks. Titov praised the atmosphere established during Polish PM Tusk's visit; while sharp disagreements remain over missile defense and energy, Russia welcomes Poland's new conception of itself as an "ally" of Russia in EU and NATO corridors. End Summary

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Kosovo: Russia Focuses on Diplomatic Countermeasures  
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[1](#)2. (C) In a February 14 meeting with the Ambassador, a relaxed DFM Titov jovially noted the hesitancy of EU states and the U.S. to confirm the timing of a Kosovo declaration of independence, but said he was prepared to come to the office on Sunday, February 17. Expecting little from the UN Security Council session then underway, Titov said the only mystery for the GOR was whether there would be any element of phased independence that might provide a lifeline to Serbian President Tadic. Otherwise, Titov pointed to Putin's comments that day at a press conference, in which he declared a UDI immoral, illegal and driven by political expediency, as shaping the tenor of the GOR's response.

[1](#)3. (C) Acknowledging that time had run out on persuading the U.S. to adopt a different course, Titov reiterated Russia's objections: Kosovo would become a precedent, it would destabilize the region, Northern Kosovar Serb rejection of Kosovo's independence would lead to a creation of a new frozen conflict in the heart of Europe ("now we'll need negotiations on the territorial integrity of Kosovo"), the authority of the Security Council would erode further ("Iran also will pick and choose resolutions to enforce"), and the artificial time line for the conflict's resolution would come at the cost of European stability over the long-term. Titov

mused that it was difficult to understand European motivations. While the U.S. got to be the "liberator," the Europeans would be left the "occupiers," and speculated that an exaggerated tendency toward unity, a need to maintain consensus behind EU reform, and the desire to avoid another Iraq-esque split with the United States was driving this mis-step.

¶4. (C) Titov lingered on the deleterious consequences of a Kosovo UDI on the immediate region. Arguing that Macedonia (regardless of imminent NATO status) feared Albanian irredentism, Titov warned of an understanding between Tirana and the Kosovar leadership that Kosovo's independence would not be the last step; instead, a "friendly space" would soon be declared, leading to an Albanian supra-government. Titov predicted that Serbia's Radicals would push for early parliamentary elections, with the resulting power vacuum in Belgrade presenting a real danger. With Serbia's EU political agreement now tied to Kosovo's status, Titov argued that Tadic had little room for maneuver. If Kosovo's independence were "phased," Tadic could move forward with the EU, while promising to resist next steps in Kosovo's drive towards independence; if independence came at once, Tadic would be at the end of his political tether.

¶5. (C) Titov ruled out a Serbian (or, for that matter, Russian) military response, but said that a potential for violence and displacement of civilians existed in the central and southern sectors of Kosovo. While the northern zone was "easy," with a new frozen territory emerging that would be mediated by international peace keepers, Titov expressed concern that further partitions could exacerbate the already dangerous Kosovo precedent. Much was riding on Serbia's reaction, and while the GOR believed that Belgrade would not

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be overly "sharp," "they will do something."

¶6. (C) In the wake of a UDI, Titov said the GOR would "behave responsibly" and take a series of diplomatic steps. Titov confirmed that Russia would support Serbia's call for a special session of the UN Security Council, but made no mention of invoking the Berlin mechanism at the OSCE, and separately we learned that the MFA rebuffed a proposed visit by FM Jeremic on February 20. The MFA and Kremlin will issue sharp condemnations, couching UDI as a violation of international law and rejecting the argument that "special circumstances" drove U.S. and EU action. Titov pointed also to a planned joint statement by the Duma and Federation Council, but did not tip his hand on whether the legislators would focus their appeal on Russian reciprocal recognition of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria (which the Duma has done in the past). Titov, noting Putin's "wise" formulation at the Thursday press conference, said Russia would not mirror the West with respect to the other frozen conflicts, "but our interests will continue to be advanced." (While the Ambassador was meeting with Titov, DFM Karasin met with Abkhaz "Foreign Minister" Shamba to discuss Abkhaz and Russian relations in light of the expected independence of Kosovo.) Titov said GOR-Serbian relations would continue to strengthen, pointing to a recent Gazprom agreement (ref. A), although the Serbian Embassy has stressed to us its "framework" nature in the wake of the Tadic victory.

¶7. (C) The Ambassador seconded Titov's call to keep lines of communication open, and stressed that regardless of UDI timing, both the U.S. and EU would send a strong message to the Kosovars on the importance of respecting minority rights, and ensuring stability and calm. The Ambassador stressed that it would be a mistake to underestimate the dangers inherent in this political transition, but that the worst outcome for all concerned would be an outbreak of violence. Noting the EU's message to the Serbian leadership to keep its longer-term interests in mind, the Ambassador urged the GOR to play a constructive role in encouraging Serbia's European integration.

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Bosnia: Deteriorating Situation  
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18. (C) Titov expressed concern over recent trends in Bosnia, contrasting OHR Lajcak's upbeat assessment during his January 31 visit to Moscow, with the recent failure to achieve police reform and an SAA. Titov stressed that the GOR had welcomed Lajcak's assessment that the work of the OHR could be substantively wrapped up by June-July, with the technical closure of the office by the end of 2008. Russia was uncertain how the recent setbacks in achieving benchmarks, coupled with the effects of a Kosovo UDI, will play out in Bosnia. While Titov downplayed the possibility of direct actions (presumably by RS's Dodik) to capitalize on Kosovo's independence, he predicted inflammatory statements that would contribute to the mood of uncertainty. The Ambassador welcomed Titov's call for close coordination leading up to the February 25-26 PIC. Titov noted the GOR's reliance on European integration as a key card in ensuring Bosnia's stability. At this stage, he warned, the EU could not afford to be less engaged in Bosnia than in Kosovo.

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Poland: Return of Pragmatism  
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19. (C) Titov's readout to the Ambassador of PM Tusk's visit tracked with lower-level MFA and Polish Embassy versions (ref. B). Describing the atmosphere as "very good," Titov said the Poles had focused on improving the tone of the bilateral relationship with Putin and his successor, First Deputy PM Medvedev, in the absence of real breakthroughs. Titov welcomed Tusk's frank and open discussion of all issues, and his pragmatic focus on identifying those areas where there was possibility of forward movement; Tusk, he said, succeeded in creating a good impression, while firmly defending Polish national interests. Tusk and the GOR agreed on an intensive bilateral calendar, which will include a May session of the committee to discuss historical issues, a July economic cooperation meeting, a visit by the GOP parliamentary leadership, and a visit by the Russian FM to Warsaw in the summer (who chairs the strategic cooperation committee that serves as the umbrella for GOR-GOP engagement).

110. (C) Titov noted that areas of deep disagreement continue to constrain the relationship. Titov described the missile defense discussions as general in nature, although Putin provided a "firm" view of the Russian position. Whereas the Poles were interested in Russian reactions "if

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there were a missile defense deployment," Titov observed, Russia remain focused on what the relationship would look like "if there were no missile defense deployment." On both missile defense and the production of Soviet-era weaponry without Russian licensing, both countries agreed to continue discussions. While Poland pushed for consideration of the Amber pipeline as an alternative to Nord Stream, Titov said Russia was unequivocal in moving forward on the Baltic sea pipeline, with Putin equally clear that Russia was prepared to meet Poland's increased energy needs. While Tusk made a pitch for Russian investment in the pipeline infrastructure to support the Lithuanian refinery in Mazeikia, Russian Energy Minister Khristenko argued that the required upgrades would result in gas prices that were equal to the gas currently provided by tankers. Titov said "historical memories" made it difficult for Tusk to accept the GOR proposal to allow Polish troops and equipment to transit Russia to Afghanistan more easily, in return for the same rights for Russian troops and equipment headed to Kaliningrad, but that the issue could potentially be raised in a broader EU context.

111. (C) The breakthrough in Polish-Russian relations, Titov

stressed, was recorded on the European front, with Poland conveying its willingness to be a "Russian ally" in EU and NATO corridors. Whereas Poland had stymied GOR cooperation with Europe in the past, Titov charged, Tusk had changed the GOP's "conception" and was prepared to help. Noting FM Lavrov's February 12 meeting with the EU Troika in Ljubljana, Titov attributed the EU's willingness to aim for a March start to PCA negotiations to Poland's change of heart. He predicted that the "dynamism" in the political relationship would translated into further progress on the bilateral economic front, where trade in 2007 surpassed 17 billion dollars.

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Comment  
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¶12. (C) Judging by Titov's body language and matter of fact portrayal of Russian actions in the wake of UDI, Russia is going to move deliberately and diplomatically, hewing closely to its argument that the U.S. and EU have violated international law and will face the consequences in degraded European stability and secessionist demands elsewhere. We will continue to monitor closely the GOR's engagement with the leadership of the frozen conflict territories for any signs of how the GOR plans to "advance its interests."  
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